

## § 20.78

Officer, or his or her designee, may deem appropriate, the Chief Financial Officer, or his or her designee, may determine which agency (or agencies), or official (or officials), shall have responsibility for carrying out the provisions of this subpart.

(e) Agencies may not initiate offset to collect a debt more than 10 years after the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, unless facts material to the right to collect the debt were not known and could not reasonably have been known by the official of the Agency who was charged with the responsibility to discover and collect such debts. When the debt first accrued should be determined according to existing laws regarding the accrual of debts, such as under 28 U.S.C. 2415.

### § 20.78 Notifications.

(a) The agency head (or designee) of the creditor Labor Department agency shall send appropriate written demands to the debtor in terms which inform the debtor of the consequences of failure to repay claims. In accordance with guidelines as may be established by the Chief Financial Officer, a total of three progressively stronger written demands at not more than 30-day intervals will normally be made unless a response to the first or second demand indicates that a further demand would be futile and the debtor's response does not require rebuttal. In determining the timing of the demand letters, agencies should give due regard to the need to act promptly so that a debt to be collected by salary offset will be recovered during the employee's anticipated period of employment with the Government.

(b) In accordance with guidelines as may be established by the Chief Financial Officer, the creditor Labor Department agency shall send (at least 30 days prior to any deduction) written notice to the debtor, informing such debtor as appropriate:

(1) Of the origin, nature and amount of the indebtedness determined by the agency to be due;

(2) Of the intention of the agency to initiate proceedings to collect the debt by means of deduction from the employee's current disposable pay account;

(3) Of the amount, frequency, proposed beginning date, and duration of the intended deductions;

(4) Unless such payments are excused in accordance with the FCCS, of the creditor agency's policy concerning assessment of interest, penalties, and administrative costs;

(5) Of the employee's right to inspect and copy Government records relating to the debt or, if the employee or his or her representative cannot personally inspect the records, to request and receive a copy of such records;

(6) If not previously provided, of the opportunity (under terms agreeable to the creditor agency) to establish a schedule for the voluntary repayment of the debt or to enter into a written agreement to establish a schedule for repayment of the debt in lieu of offset. The agreement must be in writing, be signed by both the employee and the creditor agency, and be documented in the creditor agency's files (4 CFR 102.2(e));

(7) Of the employee's right to a hearing conducted by an administrative law judge of the Department of Labor, if a petition is filed as prescribed by the Department of Labor. In the event the debtor is an employee working in the Office of Administrative Law Judges, the notification shall inform such debtor of the right to elect to have the review of the agency's determination heard and decided by a person who is not in the Office of Administrative Law Judges, and not under the supervision and control of the Secretary of Labor; in such a case, all provisions in this subpart will otherwise apply, unless stated otherwise in the notification;

(8) Of the method and time period for petitioning for hearing;

(9) That the timely filing of a petition for hearing will stay the commencement of collection proceedings, unless the creditor agency determines that § 20.81(d) applies and further informs the debtor of the basis for its determination;

(10) That a final decision on the hearing (if one is requested) will be issued at the earliest practical date, but not later than 60 days after the filing of the petition requesting the hearing unless

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the employee requests and the administrative law judge grants a delay in the proceedings;

(11) That any knowingly false or frivolous statements, representations, or evidence may subject the employee to:

(i) Disciplinary procedures appropriate under chapter 75 of title 5 U.S.C., part 752 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, or any other applicable statutes or regulations;

(ii) Penalties under the False Claims Act, sections 3729-3731 of title 31 U.S.C., or any other applicable statutory authority; or

(iii) Criminal penalties under sections 286, 287, 1001 and 1002 of title 18 U.S.C., or any other applicable statutory authority;

(12) Of any other rights and remedies available to the employee under statutes or regulations governing the program for which the collection is being made; and

(13) That unless there are applicable contractual or statutory provisions to the contrary, amounts paid on or deducted for the debt which are later waived or found not owed to the United States will be promptly refunded to the employee.

(c) Creditor Labor Department agencies shall also include in their demand letters the notice provisions to debtors required by other regulations of the Labor Department, pertaining to disclosures to credit reporting agencies, administrative offset from other sources of funds, and the assessment of interest, penalties and administrative costs, to the extent inclusion of such is appropriate and practicable.

(d) The responsible agency head (or designee) shall exercise due care to ensure that demand letters are mailed or hand-delivered on the same day that they are actually dated. If evidence suggests that the debtor is no longer located at the address of record, reasonable action shall be taken to obtain a current address.

(e) The creditor Labor Department agency shall, in the initial demand letter to the debtor, provide the name of an agency employee who can provide a full explanation of the claim.

(f) In any internal Labor Department collection, the provisions of § 20.78 paragraphs (a) through (e) need not be

applied to any adjustment to pay which is not considered to be the result of collection of a debt, such as excess pay or allowances caused by:

(1) An employee's election of coverage or a change of coverage under a Federal benefits program requiring periodic deductions from pay, if the amount to be recovered was accumulated in four pay periods or less; or

(2) Ministerial adjustments in pay rates or allowances which cannot be placed into effect immediately because of normal processing delays, if the amount to be recovered was accumulated in four pay periods or less.

**§ 20.79 Examination of records relating to the claim; opportunity for full explanation of the claim.**

Following receipt of the notice specified in § 20.78(b), the debtor may request to examine and copy agency records pertaining to the debt.

**§ 20.80 Opportunity for repayment.**

(a) The creditor Labor Department agency shall afford the debtor the opportunity to (1) repay the debt or (2) enter into a repayment plan which is agreeable to the agency head (or designee) and is in a written form signed by such debtor and the creditor agency. The head of the agency (or designee) may deem a repayment plan to be abrogated if the debtor should, after the repayment plan is signed, fail to comply with the terms of the plan.

(b) Agencies have discretion and should exercise sound judgment in determining whether to accept a repayment agreement in lieu of offset. The determination should balance the Government's interest in collecting the debt against fairness to the debtor. If the debt is delinquent and the debtor has not disputed its existence or amount, an agency should effect an offset unless the debtor is able to establish that offset would result in undue financial hardship or would be against equity and good conscience, or the agency otherwise determines that offset would be contrary to sound judgment.